

ROCKLAND, MAINE

FINE ART, FINE DINING, FINE ACCOMMODATIONS

Maine is famous for its picturesque, artsy villages dotting the craggy coastline from Kittery to Cutler. Rockland was long included among the scores of such charming oceanside hamlets, but over the past few years, it has quietly evolved into a world-class destination for visual art.

Anchored by the Farnsworth Art Museum – an international mecca for Wyeth fans – Rockland made a quantum leap forward with the 2016 opening of the architecturally exquisite Toshiko Mori-designed Center for Maine Contemporary Art. While Rockland already boasted more galleries than any other Maine municipality – including Portland – the sleek new CMCA underscores that cutting edge contemporary art has decisively overtaken traditional plein air painting as Maine's primary output.

With the fresh blossoming of art venues, finer amenities followed. Whereas Main Street was once quaintly lined with tchotchke shops, diners and secondhand stores, it is now essentially a row of galleries standing cheek-to-cheek with top-shelf dining, tasty new taprooms and cozy cafes.

While art and picturesque coastal views are more than enough to make Rockland a destination, the creature comforts are reason to stay. My wife and I found our favorite cocktail anywhere in the state at Ada's Kitchen, 449 Main St. – The Charred Matador, a bright, heady and herbal blend of tequila, charred rosemary, green chartreuse, lime and pineapple juice. With its excellent Italian-inspired small dishes

and appetizers, Ada's is a great place to wind down after a long day taking in the sights.

While I have enjoyed some of the best sushi New York and Tokyo have to offer, one of my favorite spots is Suzuki's Sushi Bar, 419 Main St. It rivals anything anywhere for fresh fish and lively presentation. If you're feeling more upscale, you can't go wrong with James Beard Award-winning Chef Melissa Kelly's farm-to-table Primo, 2 S. Main St. But if you want something unique, make for the idiosyncratic Cafe Miranda, just a block off the main strip at 15 Oak St. The quirky nook features a surprisingly vast menu with something satisfying for every diner.

For art fans, the clear choice in accommodations is 250 Main Hotel. Along with the ocean view, the casually elegant boutique hotel features copious well-curated works by regional contemporary artists.

Make no mistake about it: Art is what really puts Rockland on the map. While there are more than 20 worthy galleries and museums, here are a few summer highlights that shouldn't be missed.

CENTER FOR MAINE CONTEMPORARY ART, 21 WINTER ST., CMCANOW.ORG.

The CMCA's summer lineup from June 29 to October 13 features a trio of shows beginning with the conceptually edgy duo of Danish artist Lars Boye Jerlach and British artist Helen Stringfellow. Their cynically playful installation "DREAMS CAN

WANDERLUST

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LEFT: 250 Main Hotel.

RIGHT: Cafe Miranda.



COME TRUE (If it's not working for you, you're not doing it right)" presents self-help questionnaires to visitors so each can achieve the self-actualized "life of their dreams" – and make a model of it to leave in the gallery.

Dan Mills' "Human Topographies" is a continuation of the double-life art- man's painterly interventions on old

Ann Craven's "Birds We Know" features images of birds, trees and moons along with the accompanying stripe paintings she makes to mark her color for memory. Craven's style tips its hat to Maine artist colony painters such as Alex Katz but with an almost luridly vivid palette.



TOP LEFT: Ann Craven, *Portrait of a Robin (Looking Away, After Picabia)*, 2011, at Center for Maine Contemporary Art.

TOP RIGHT: Wade Kavanaugh and Stephen B. Nguyen installation, at Center for Maine Contemporary Art.

BOTTOM LEFT: Wade Kavanaugh and Stephen B. Nguyen installation, at Center for Maine Contemporary Art.



BOTTOM RIGHT: Sebastian Blanck, *Striped Umbrellas*, 2018, oil on linen, 30" x 24", at Dowling Walsh Gallery.



maps. By day, Mills is the director of the Bates College Museum of Art. Best known for his hysterically paranoid consideration of what foreign territories could be colonized into American states – which it terrifyingly turns out, stem from actual CIA considerations – Mills is now painting and collaging his map-based works with deeply researched data streams about conflict and colonialism across countries and "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" among the American states.

THE FARNSWORTH ART MUSEUM, 16 MUSEUM ST., FARNSWORTHMUSEUM.ORG.

You can pretty much count on the Farnsworth to have at least three shows of works by the Wyeths at any given time. This is a good thing: It's important and impressive work and the Farnsworth knows it intimately. This year's particularly poignant exhibition is the humbly scaled "Slab City Rendezvous," an intimate consideration of the informal artist community that grew out of Lois Dodd's and Alex Katz's